NYTimes NOV 18 1971

The Guileless Prosecutor

Few Government officials, one must hope, are as insensible to the offer of a bribe as Deputy Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, Number Two man in the Department of Justice.

Somehow he did not consider in this light the proposal a year ago of one Robert T. Carson that if Mr. Kleindienst would help get a friend of Mr. Carson's out of trouble, the well-heeled friend would contribute up to $100,000 to President Nixon's re-election campaign. When Mr. Carson, a former chairman of the Hawaii Republican party, explained further that his friend was already under indictment for several Federal offenses the Deputy Attorney General declined to hear any more. But it did not occur to him even to confide the matter to Attorney General Mitchell until he learned, a week later, that Mr. Carson, too, was under investigation by the F.B.I. in connection with the friend's prosecution for stock frauds.

Testifying this week in Mr. Carson's trial on other bribery charges, Mr. Kleindienst swore that he had simply not thought of the $100,000 offer as a bribe until he was told of the investigation. Because the money was not intended for his personal use? Perhaps. But as one of the President's key fund-raisers and campaigners, he might surely have seen the proposed contribution as the price offered if the Administration would only tamper with the course of justice.

If it takes the Deputy Attorney General a week and the coincidence of a related investigation to recognize a bribe offer made directly to him, he is perhaps too naive for the second most important legal post in the United States Government.